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ABSTRACT

This monograph discusses the question of flexibility as permitted by the standards of the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), a question of concern to educators eager to meet the standards and to satisfy the needs of school personnel. Flexibility is defined, and the purpose and design of NCATE standards discussed. Thurman indicates that deliberate effort has been made in the standards to encourage individuality, imagination, and innovation. In spite of this, he continues, questions about flexibility persist for the following reasons: a) lack of distinction between flexibility and alternative approaches, b) lack of distinction between standards as a basis for program development and evaluation and as a framework for preparing the institutional report, c) lack of statements in the standards about experimentation, and d) uncertainty about what the visiting team and evaluation board deem important. Each of these reasons is examined in relation to the standards. Thurman advocates working within the standards to improve and develop programs and further explication of the standards by NCATE. (JA)

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FLEXIBILITY IN PROGRAM PLANNING AND NCATE STANDARDS

by

Robert Thurman

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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FOREWORD

Since accreditation is a powerful influence in teacher education, this publication should stimulate progress toward relevant and vital programs. It was created at a writing conference held at Gatlinburg, Tennessee, June 1972. Therefore, it reflects the collective knowledge and wisdom of several individuals, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) Commission on Standards, and some AACTE staff persons.

The standards now used by the National Commission on Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) stress flexible and creative utilization, an effort to adopt and adapt the best thinking of the education community. Thurman's paper provides thoughtful guidelines for such an approach.

It is appropriate to acknowledge Karl Massanari, AACTE associate director with major staff responsibility for developing standards for NCATE; Rolf Larson, director of NCATE; Bernard Rezabek, associate director of NCATE; Doran Christensen, associate director of NCATE; and the former AACTE Commission on Standards, which helped to determine the contents of this paper.

You may do further research on this topic by checking issues of Research in Education (RIE) and Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE). Both RIE and CIJE use the same descriptors (index terms). Documents in RIE are listed in blocks according to the clearinghouse code letters which processed them, beginning with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Career Education (CE) and ending with the ERIC Clearinghouse on the Disadvantaged (UD). The clearinghouse code letters, which are listed at the beginning of RIE, appear opposite the ED number at the beginning of each entry. "SP" (School Personnel) designates documents processed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.

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--Joel L. Burdin, Director

February 1974

ABSTRACT

This monograph discusses the question of flexibility as it is permitted by the standards of the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), a question of concern to educators eager to meet the standards but also eager to satisfy the needs of school personnel. Flexibility is defined and the purpose and design of NCATE standards discussed. It is indicated that deliberate effort is said to have been made in the standards to encourage individuality, imagination, and innovation. In spite of this stated effort, the author continues, questions about flexibility persist for the following reasons: a) lack of distinction between flexibility and alternative approaches, b) lack of distinction between standards as a basis for program development and evaluation and as a framework for preparing the institutional report, c) lack of statements in the standards about experimentation, and d) uncertainty about what the visiting team and evaluation board deem important. Each of these reasons is examined in relation to the standards. The author advocates working within the standards to improve and develop programs and further explication of the standards by NCATE. (JA)

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TOPIC: *Flexibility in Program Planning and NCATE Standards.*

DESCRIPTORS TO USE IN CONTINUING SEARCH OF RIE AND CIJE:

*Academic Standards
*Accreditation (Institutions)
Humanization
Program Development
Program Evaluation
Standards
*Teacher Education
*Teacher Programs

*Asterisk(s) indicate major descriptors.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the roles and responsibilities of teachers in elementary and secondary schools call for changes in ways these teachers are prepared. Many teacher educators see the need to prepare teachers for particular settings such as the rural area or the inner city. Other educators want to develop an experimental component to test different approaches for preparing teachers. There are still other educators who want to move much of the professional preparation away from the campus to local schools.

With accreditation at stake, these teacher educators often feel that they are in a predicament. They are uncertain to what extent programs can be developed to meet the unique needs of school personnel and still meet the standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). They wonder whether the standards call for a standardized program to be followed by all institutions. They also are interested in knowing how much flexibility is permitted by NCATE standards.

The Meaning of Flexibility

"Flexibility" is a good word that has a positive connotation. It implies openness, the avoidance of rigidity, and a change from something more exacting to something more pliable.

Some educators also use the term to indicate an opportunity for choice between two or more possibilities. However, they really mean the opportunity offers alternatives, not flexibility.

The use of "flexibility" to include both meanings creates little difficulty until educators begin to discuss specific applications to a program. Two educators may agree in general that flexibility in teacher education is necessary. However, while one means that under certain conditions some elements can be adapted to meet particular needs of a student but the basic program remains intact, the other means that a prospective English teacher can choose between two programs, each differing in philosophy, requirements, and approach.

Such a difference in these uses of "flexibility" may create little problem for educators and may provide the basis for a lively debate. Little problem, that is, until the matter of accreditation for teacher education comes up. It then becomes important to make a clear distinction in meaning between flexibility and alternatives with relation to teacher education programs. With this distinction, then, teacher educators can examine the standards to determine what they have to say about the following:

1. Flexibility among elements within a basic program;

2. Alternative programs based on different conceptualizations of teacher roles (one concept for teachers in general, one for teachers going to the inner city, etc.);

3. Alternative programs based on the same conceptualization of teacher roles (the same conceptualization but two competing programs, such as a regular program and a performance-based one, or two competing programs located in two different departments).

Closely related to these three areas is the stand by NCATE toward experimentation to improve the regular ongoing program.

PURPOSE AND DESIGN FOR NCATE STANDARDS

To understand the standards, we must examine them within the context of their purpose and design.

Purpose of NCATE Standards

One purpose of national accreditation for teacher education is to ensure that approved programs meet national standards of quality. Two obvious approaches can be used to determine this quality. There can be criteria that prescribe precisely the definite level of quality to be met. Thus, the student-faculty ratio is set, the faculty load is established, and an index is used in determining the library holdings.

Another approach is to describe characteristics or elements to be found in an acceptable program but not set the level of quality. In this approach, no pattern, model, or design is set. The burden is on teacher educators in the institution* to demonstrate that its teacher education program has these elements in some design and has the level of quality to merit accreditation.

NCATE follows the second approach. It views the teaching profession as one "where the state of the art is constantly improving"[1] so that the level of quality of teacher education programs can be expected to rise. Rather than build specific patterns or requirements into the standards, which could have a negative impact on programs, it sets forth elements to be included in teacher education programs that can be adapted, as necessary, according to the needs and characteristics of each institution. It then becomes the responsibility of the institution to demonstrate that persons who complete the teacher education program can perform satisfactorily in professional school settings.

The standards dealing with students in basic programs demonstrate how this approach operates and what is expected of institutions. These standards call for the institution a) to apply specific criteria, using both objective and subjective data, for admitting students to the teacher education program;[2] b) to apply specific criteria for retention of candidates who possess academic competencies and personal characteristics appropriate to requirements of teaching;[3] and c) to have a well-defined plan for counseling and advising students.[4] The standards do not establish a minimum grade point average to be met by students, which instruments to use in developing objective data, or what kind of advising program to use. The institution is expected a) to determine the minimum

*Hereafter, "institution" refers to teacher educators in institutions.

academic and personal qualities prospective teachers must have for admission to and retention in the teacher education program, b) to have a procedure for determining whether students possess these qualities, and c) to have evidence that the students do indeed meet the requirements.

The standards on students in basic programs do not stand alone as separate entities, however. They are based on and related to other standards. The standards on curricula for basic programs call for a description of the professional roles for which the programs are designed, which in turn influence the kinds of individuals needed for the programs. It is expected, in addition, that the institution will utilize not only the judgment of the faculty in setting up requirements concerning students but also research and development in teacher education, as well as contributions of national learned societies and professional associations. Then the standards in section 5 call for an evaluation system to demonstrate the effectiveness of the process.

The way the standards are written enables a large, multipurpose university to design a procedure dealing with students in a manner different from that adopted by a small, liberal arts college or by other types of institutions. All types of institutions, however, must demonstrate that the students who complete the program have the qualifications that promise successful performance in the profession, and they must evidence that the students are indeed successful.

These institutions can set very high levels by which to measure their programs.

Design of the Standards

Any discussion of the standards must take into account their design. Because of the way they are presented and because of their preoccupation with individual standards, it is easy to overlook any design or relationship. A careful study, however, shows the standards are designed to have at least two relationships.

One relationship is circular in nature and involves the following standards:

1.5 The design, approval, and continuous evaluation and development of teacher education programs are the primary responsibility of an officially designated unit; the majority of the membership of this unit is composed of faculty and/or staff members who are significantly involved in teacher education.

1.1 Teacher education curricula are based on objectives reflecting the institution's conception of the teacher's role and are organized to include general studies, content for the teaching specialty, humanistic and behavioral studies, teaching and learning theory with laboratory and clinical experience, and practicum.

1.4. In planning and developing curricula for teacher education, the institution gives due consideration to guidelines for teacher preparation developed by national learned societies and professional organizations.

5.1 The institution conducts a well-defined plan for evaluating the teachers it prepares.

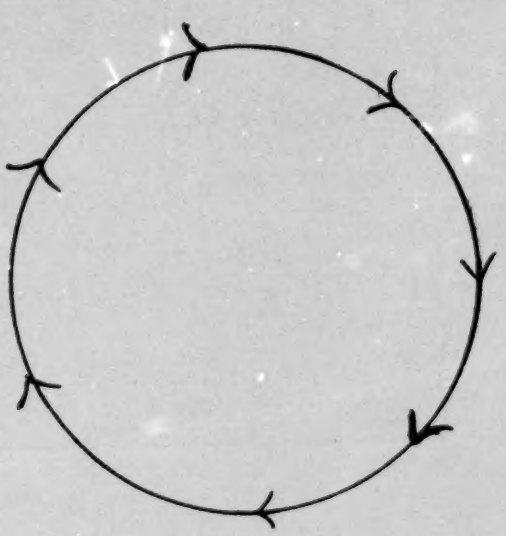
5.2 The institution uses the evaluation results in the study, development and improvement of its teacher education programs.

These standards tie together four aspects of a teacher education program: a) the conceptualization of roles for which professional personnel are to be prepared, b) the development of programs, c) the evaluation of the programs, and d) a reconceptualization based on the evaluation. The other standards fit into one or more of these aspects as shown in the following figure.

FIGURE 1

Reconceptualization
5.2, 5.3, 1, 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 3.4

Conceptualization of roles
1, 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 3.4, 5.2, 5.3



Program Evaluation
1, 1.1, 1.4, 3.4, 5.1, 5.3

Program developed and offered
1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3

The interrelationship of the standards calls for a continuous flow of action, not a stop-and-go operation in which the program is conceptualized, then developed, then later given an evaluation system, and then still later reconceptualized. To be of greatest value, the procedure for evaluation must be instituted at the time the program is conceptualized; reconceptualizing can and must be possible at any time it is needed rather than at certain times of the year or at the end of a set number of years.

The second relationship is an interlocking one. No standard stands alone, but rather each has a close harmonic tie to one or more other standards.

Standard 1.1, Design of Curricula, has a relationship to all other standards, since the objectives that reflect the institution's conception of the teacher's role influence the kinds of students admitted to the program, the number and role of faculty members, the design and content of general and professional studies, and the kinds of instructional materials. The extent to which the objectives are described influences the effectiveness of evaluation and use of the results.

The standard on faculty, Standard 2, relates to standards bearing on the curricula, student, resources, and evaluation.

Standard 3.4, Student Participation in Program Evaluation and Development, has an affect on 1.1 (Design of Curricula), 1.2 and 1.3 (The Components of the Program), and 5 (Evaluation).

Thus, no one standard can be implemented or varied without some impact on other standards.

Innovation and the Standards

The point is made in the introduction to *Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education** that a deliberate effort was made to encourage individuality, imagination, and innovation. The implication is that no single pattern is expected to be developed by all institutions--an institution can be creative in its approach to preparing teachers.

NCATE STANDARDS AND FLEXIBILITY

If NCATE standards state and imply that individuality, imagination, and innovation are encouraged, why then, are there still questions in the minds of teacher educators about flexibility?

There seem to be three reasons.

1. A lack of distinction between flexibility and alternative approaches,
2. A lack of distinction between the standards as a basis for program development and evaluation and as a framework for preparing the institutional report, and

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*Referred to hereafter as *Standards*

3. Uncertainty about what the council and its evaluation committee--the visiting team and Evaluation Board--will deem as important or acceptable.

Flexible versus Alternative Programs

The flexible versus alternative program approach also can be labeled the "single program versus multiple program" approach. The single program concept calls for a basic program to be followed by all prospective teachers, with variations built in to allow for particular needs. Thus, all students in elementary education follow the same program, with some variation for those interested in the very young child or for those interested in teaching at the middle-school level.

The alternative or multiple program concept has two or more competing programs to prepare teachers to assume the same role. One of the most common types of alternative programs occurs in institutions where faculty members cannot agree on a basic program. This is found especially in programs for secondary teachers when the faculty in the college of education and faculties in other colleges fail to reach agreement, with the result that students enrolled in the college of education follow one program and those enrolled in another college preparing for the same teaching assignment follow a much different program.

While the NCATE standards make it clear that no single pattern or design for teacher education is prescribed to be adopted by all institutions, it seems equally clear that each institution is expected to have a single basic design. According to the preamble of Standard 1, there are to be explicitly stated objectives, and "it is assumed that the *design* [emphasis added] of each curriculum for the preparation of teachers (to accomplish these objective). . . reflects the judgment of appropriate members of the faculty, and staff, of students, of graduates, and of the profession as a whole."[5] Taken at face value, this says each curriculum will have one design that reflects a judgment of appropriate faculty members. An institution that prepares teachers for elementary schools is expected to state in explicit terms the objectives of the programs and to design a curriculum to accomplish these objectives.

In light of the standards, an institution would have a difficult time justifying ongoing, competing alternative programs based on the same conceptualization of teacher roles (for example, a performance-based, highly individualized program competing with a classroom-based one). The institution would need to show that the teacher education faculty was involved in designing, approving, and developing *both* programs and would have to answer these questions: If the products of both programs are comparable, why keep both programs in operation? If the product of one program is superior to that of the other, why maintain the weaker program? If one program is stronger than the other, is one looked on as a second-class program and if so, what effect does this have on the faculty, students, and available resources? Regardless of whether the programs are comparable or one is superior to the other, is this a wise use of faculty and resources?

Thus, the standards support the single program concept, not the multiple program or alternative approach, within an institution.

This is not to be interpreted as meaning that all institutions are to adopt the same program design. Each one is responsible for developing its own drawing, on the best information available, to accomplish the goals it sets forth.

Flexibility, on the other hand, seems to be a viable concept so far as the standards are concerned. Nothing in the standards precludes an institution from developing flexible approaches for accomplishing stated goals. Indeed, Standard 1.2 urges that the general studies component be individualized according to the needs and interests of students. There is nothing to indicate in any of the other standards that various learning experiences must be approached in an identical manner by all students or that all must spend the same length of time in each experience.

In providing for such flexibility, the institution is expected to provide qualified advisors who can help students to assess their strengths and weaknesses and to use these assessments in planning a program of study. Doubtless there need to be guidelines for these advisors and students to assure the variations permitted are reasonable. In addition, there needs to be an evaluation system to determine whether the objectives of the program are achieved.

The faculty is another area where flexibility can be applied. The standards call for a faculty adequate in size and preparation for the program offered. Part-time faculty members can be utilized, with the caution that the number be controlled to prevent fragmentation of instruction.

Within these guidelines, several possibilities are open to institutions. Full-time faculty members can develop team-teaching arrangements in which they draw on the strengths of each professor. A professor in an academic department and a professor in secondary education might team to offer a methods and materials course for prospective secondary teachers.

To relate the theory and practice to classroom settings, a full-time faculty member could team with a practicing classroom teacher. For example, a kindergarten methods and materials course could be taught by a professor in early childhood education and a practicing kindergarten teacher. Such an arrangement could keep the course related to the total teacher education program and at the same time allow for the contributions that can be made only by a practicing classroom teacher.

Nothing in the standards calls for courses to be taught on campus. Care must be exercised, however, that wherever the course is taught, adequate instructional resources for use by college-level students are available.

The standards lend themselves to considerable flexibility. It is up to each institution to determine how it will be applied.

A Lack of Distinction between the Standards as a Basis for Program Development and Evaluation and as a Framework for Preparing the Institutional Report

According to the Introduction to *Standards*, institutions are expected to meet the standards at an acceptable level, to prepare a report based on the standards, and--in the event a particular program follows a different design--to develop a different organization if necessary. There is nothing in the Introduction about the use of standards by institutions *prior* to the evaluation by NCATE as a basis for developing the program, determining program effectiveness, or collecting data. Although it can be argued that these uses are implied, it appears that the primary purpose of the standards is to provide a framework for the institutional report describing the teacher education program.

This singular use of the standards seems to be well understood by those at the institutional level, if not by those who wrote *Standards*. Seventy-five institutions scheduled for evaluation were surveyed about various aspects of the standards. In response to a question that asked whether the faculty had used the standards for program planning or evaluation of the program prior to preparation of the NCATE report, the reply with few exceptions was no.

If these were institutions asking for initial approval, it might be thought that they merely misunderstood how the standards were to be used. The majority of institutions surveyed, however, was asking reaccreditation, and many had been accredited by NCATE in 1954. This was no new venture for them. Even so, they still used the standards only at the time of evaluation.

When standards are used only at the time of report writing, severe problems can develop. As one institution reported, "We were pushed into areas we had not previously covered in other evaluations and, therefore, had no available data." Another institution wrote, "Institutional record-keeping system is not designed to provide the data required by standards." This latter comment on data was echoed by a large number of those responding. Another institution said it "did not have time to develop explicitly stated objectives" as called for in Standard 1. A major problem reported by one institution was "Teacher Education is viewed by the standards as an all-institution activity but we could not get cooperation from departments outside of education when it came time for writing the report. They were not deeply involved."

When those responsible for preparing the institution's report turn to the standards, they find they do not have the kind or amount of substantive information called for to show the effectiveness of the teacher education program. As a result, the writers are limited to a description of the form the program has. In addition, with little data available to draw on, these writers must use broad, general statements to describe the teacher education program. When the program's form is not very compatible with the characteristics in the standards, the writers can easily get the idea that since the form does not blend with the standards, it is the standards that are inflexible.

Reports such as these create problems for the Evaluation Board. The board is faced with the predicament of evaluating a program based on a report that has some or many of the characteristics listed in the standards but little supporting data to enable an assessment of the quality. General statements that "faculty members from different departments get together when problems arise in programs" give little help in determining whether Standard 1.3, which calls in part for joint planning by faculty members in the academic field and in teacher education, is met. To report that "programs are individualized" means little unless accompanied by supporting criteria that are used and by examples of how they are applied. The problem is increased when many of the characteristics called for in the standards are not reported on by the institution. The report many include a description of the program pattern but omit the conceptualization on which it is based. It may describe some criteria used for admission to and retention in teacher education but little data on the effectiveness of these criteria.

The Evaluation Board reports to the council that it is uncertain about the level of quality of the teacher education at a particular institution because certain characteristics were not reported on and/or corroborating evidence was not adequate in quantity or depth. The council, in turn, sends a letter to the institution pointing out these deficiencies. The letter may contain comments such as "There is need for conceptualization of the secondary education program" or "The load carried by the faculty appears to be excessive." When the institution receives the letter that contains such criticisms, the faculty members are naturally disappointed and conclude that the council has a standard program in mind and is trying to force all institutions into this one mold. It also reinforces a doubt they had about NCATE's sincerity in saying it encourages individuality, imagination, and innovation, for if the council criticizes a program of long standing, it certainly will not approve an experimental one.

What happens as a result of these criticisms doubtless depends on the severity of the problems. If severe enough to endanger approval by NCATE, the institution may make various modifications in the program. If they are not serious enough to affect accreditation, the institution will note that NCATE called areas of concern to their attention and may do little else.

Then, once accredited and reaccredited, the NCATE standards are filed away, not to be resurrected until the next evaluation by NCATE.

NCATE Standards and Experimentation

A long-standing concern of many teacher educators is whether they would be penalized by NCATE if they had an experimental program for preparing teachers.

There is some basis for this concern because *Standards* is silent on *general* experimentation. The only reference applies to special programs. In Standard 1, Curricula for Basic Programs, the only comment on experimental programs refers to programs developed to prepare teachers with special competencies, such as teachers for bilingual children, for

disadvantaged children, or for ungraded schools. In Standard 3, which concerns students, an institution is told it can develop experimental programs for students who do not meet the usual admission criteria but who have potential.

Nothing is presented in the standards, however, which gives approval or support to experimentation for the purpose of improving the regular program.

It can be argued with some logic that the statement found in the Introduction to *Standards* gives NCATE approval to such experimentation. It reads:

> Responsible experimentation and innovation are essential to improvement of teacher education programs. A deliberate attempt has been made in these standards to encourage individuality, imagination, and innovation in institutional planning.[6]

Some educators do not find that this statement provides much motivation because programs are or should be evaluated by *Standards* and not by the Introduction.

At the same time, institutions cannot excuse the paucity of experimental programs because an explicit statement is lacking in *Standards* or because they are fearful of NCATE action if they conduct such activities. *Standards* is silent on many matters, but this does not seem to hinder institutions. As illustration, *Standards* has nothing pertaining to off-campus centers where professional courses are offered, yet, such off-campus centers are increasing in number. All too often, faculty members carry these courses as an overload and travel great distances to teach them. Quite frequently, instructional resources are very limited and the quality of teaching and learning may not measure up to that for comparable courses offered on the campus. If the same logic were applied to the development of these centers as is often applied to the lack of experimental programs, there would be fewer such centers.

An institution conducting experimental approaches in teacher education should keep three considerations in mind insofar as NCATE standards are concerned. One: the institution should be able to demonstrate that the experimental approach is a responsible attempt to improve teacher education or to meet special needs of particular teachers. Two: there must be a design that includes a rationale, procedures, and an evaluation component that includes assessing graduates of the program in relation to the objectives. Three: the experimental program is subject to the same scrutiny for quality as the regular, ongoing program.

Uncertainty about What the Council and Its Evaluation Committees--The Visiting Team and Evaluation Board--Deem Important

Judging by comments of institutions surveyed, there is considerable concern as to what the council and its committees deem important.

Institutions are uncertain about whether the council and its evaluation committees take a holistic view of the standards or whether all standards are equal but some are considered more equal than others. For example, is student participation in program evaluation and development considered by NCATE as being more important than faculty participation? According to *Standards*, it seems so, because Standard 3.4 specifically calls for student participation while faculty participation is mentioned only in the preamble to several standards, but not in a standard as such.

It is not clear in the minds of some just what constitutes "due consideration" of guidelines from learned societies and professional associations, especially when guidelines for many professional fields do not exist. This uncertainty serves as a hindering force, keeping some institutions from being very innovative. Apparently, to many, the safest path to accreditation is to continue that which has been done in the past and found acceptable.

A BROADER VIEW IS NEEDED

The notion that NCATE standards call for a monolithic teacher education program to be adopted by all should quickly be dispelled by an examination of the annual list of accredited institutions. While most, if not all, of these programs have many common elements, they differ in many important ways ranging from objectives to requirements to organizational pattern. Yet, each is deemed by NCATE as having met the standards at an acceptable level.

The time has come when each institution should shift from the negative "What we could do if it weren't for NCATE standards" to "How can NCATE standards, along with other guides, be used to develop and improve the teacher education program?"

There is a number of steps an institution can take to understand better what the standards call for and to utilize them for program development. At the same time, the institution should expect that both NCATE and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) should do a number of things that aid it and alleviate institutional concerns. NCATE has a responsibility as the accrediting agency that applies the standards. AACTE has a role to play since it is the organization that works with a large proportion of institutions preparing teachers and since it has a major role in developing standards adopted by NCATE.

What the Institution Can Do

Many concerns of an institution can be lessened it if becomes familiar with the NCATE standards and studies ways to relate them to the teacher education program long before the evaluation for accreditation. If an institution does, it may avoid what Clifford Bebell describes as the "emotionality of evaluation."[7] When anxieties build up, views found in the standards that are generally acceptable become threatening. Thus, a standard that calls for policies which establish

maximum limits for teaching loads (Standard 2.3) seems fraught with danger, even though in calmer times teacher educators are in substantial support of it. The less familiar a person is with these views, the more threatened he becomes when they are used as a basis for evaluation.

Concerns can also be reduced if many teacher educators give more than lip service to the importance of evaluation. Judging from response to questions about Standard 5 (Evaluation, Program Review, and Planning), surveyed institutions made little effort to appraise the quality of programs and the relationship between program objectives and outcomes. It appears they do not see the relevance of evaluation to improving teacher education programs. As a result, these educators are less than enthusiastic about any evaluation, let alone one by an "outside agency" such as an accrediting body.

Perhaps the following could help an institution develop a broader view of the standards.

Recognize that the standards are what the teaching profession views as important elements in a teacher education program. The standards are developed by AACTE, not NCATE, and grew out of an intensive three-year study involving several thousand educators representing many segments of the profession. The proposed standards were revised after being tested in actual evaluation visits in colleges and universities. It was only after this that the standards were adopted by NCATE.

This is not to suggest that the standards are to be accepted uncritically. It is only to serve as a reminder that they represent the views of a broad segment of the teaching profession, not just the views of NCATE.

Consider the standards as general guidelines for improving programs for preparation of teachers and other professional personnel. As pointed out by AACTE in the Foreword to *Recommended Standards for Teacher Education*, the standards have two purposes: one, as a basis for accreditation; and two, as guidelines for program improvement. When used these ways, they must be used more than once a decade just for evaluation for accreditation.

The standards, to be used effectively for program improvement, should be incorporated into an evaluation system. Such a system needs to be continuous and it needs to encompass every objective of the program, produce the kinds of evidence needed to determine how well the objectives are realized, include interpretation of the evidence, and lead to modification where necessary. The standards can become part of the criteria used in the evaluation. Then, the preparation of the NCATE report need not be a traumatic matter because evidence, subjective and objective, is readily available and that which is most meaningful can be presented, thus reducing the length of reports.

Study to determine the relationships among the standards. Because of the way the standards are presented, it is impossible for a faculty to overlook the relationships that exist among them. An understanding of the relationships can help a faculty better grasp the rationale for individual standards and the impact or influence of one standard on another.

Particular attention needs to be paid to Standard 5.3, which calls for long-range planning. This standard gives support to and calls for experimentation and innovation leading to program improvement.

Study the standards to determine which are descriptive (setting forth the elements) and prescriptive (telling how much). The standards, for the most part, are descriptive in nature. Standard 1.1, Design of Curricula, for example, deals with the objectives and design of curricula. There is nothing in this standard which prescribes what the objectives will be or what kinds of teachers an institution must prepare. This is left to those in the institution to determine after consultation with the professional community. The standard does call for an institution to do the following:

1. State objectives based on the institution's concept of the teacher's role;

2. Involve many segments of the profession in the development of these objectives: appropriate members of the faculty and staff, students, graduates, and the profession as a whole;

3. Use research and development in teacher education and guidelines from learned societies and professional organizations in the development of objectives; and

4. Design curricula that are based on these objectives and organized to include general studies, teaching speciality, humanistic and behavioral studies, teaching and learning theory with laboratory and clinical experiences, and practicum.

Left to the institution are how objectives are stated and--although it is implied that they be in terms that can be defined--put into operation, and evaluated.

Some standards are prescriptive. Standard 1.2, The General Studies Component, states that at least one-third of each four-year curriculum will consist of general studies. Each standard should be studied separately and in relation to other standards to determine what it calls for and what its intent is. If one appears to be inflexible, serious thought should be given as to why it seems so. For example, a number of teacher educators has indicated that the residence requirement for candidates pursuing the doctorate is too rigid, because, according to some, it is too difficult for an individual to take a leave of absence to devote an academic year to full-time study. The rationale given for the requirement is "students learn from each other and through close association with the faculty in a climate that stimulates research and scholarly effort."[8] In studying this requirement, educators should ask questions such as the following:

1. What is troublesome, the requirement or intent or both? If the intent of the standard is not acceptable, why? Is it because it violates a basic principle held by the faculty? Is it because it creates some hardship or inconvenience for students? If the latter,

are other requirements such as fees, dissertation, or class attendance set aside for the same reason?

2. Can the intent of the standard be met in other ways?

3. Will changing one standard have an impact on the overall purpose of the standards or on any other standard?

Avoid folklore. The faculty should avoid putting any stock in folklore, hearsay, or rumors about how NCATE interprets or applies the standards. When in doubt, the NCATE staff should be asked for information about the meaning or application of any standard as well as for reactions to variations a faculty is considering.

React to an inflexible standard. If, after serious study, a teacher education faculty believes a particular standard is so inflexible that if applied it would compromise a total program, the faculty has certain choices to make. It can a) develop an alternative stance and gather solid evidence, not opinion, that the intent of the standard has been met with hopes that NCATE will find it acceptable; b) work with NCATE and with the AACTE Committee on Standards to effect a change in the standard; or c) reach a decision not to request an evaluation by NCATE.

What NCATE Can Do

NCATE, as the body which applies the standards in an evaluative manner, can be expected to keep institutions informed on how standards are interpreted and applied. This means NCATE must maintain a close liaison with teacher educators in accredited institutions not only during the period when the institutions are coming up for evaluation but also during the intervening period between evaluations. What can NCATE do?

Clarify the purpose or purposes served by NCATE. As stated in the Introduction to *Standards*, NCATE serves four major purposes.

1. To assure the public that particular institutions--those named in the Annual List--offer programs for the preparation of teachers and other professional school personnel that meet national standards of quality;

2. To ensure that children and youth are served by well-prepared school personnel;

3. To advance the teaching profession through improvement of preparation programs; and

4. To provide a practical basis for reciprocity among the states in certifying professional school personnel.

These purposes, as written, imply that they include programs for preparing teachers for private as well as public schools. Yet statements by various team members and action by the council lead some teacher educators to believe that the council is concerned only or primarily with preparation of teachers for public school settings.

Until the purposes of NCATE are clearly understood, teacher educators in nonpublic institutions are uncertain how to apply the standards to their programs and how much flexibility they have with standards such as those dealing with laboratory experiences.

Assure institutions that experimentation is valued. If NCATE does indeed support and encourage experimentation, it would do well to make this known within the standards and make clear that it is applicable to all programs, not just those designed to meet pressing social needs. It would be valuable to make this a separate standard, with the preamble describing what NCATE will accept as experimentation (as compared with "just trying out something"). The standard would be applied only to those institutions with experimental programs. It would be clearly understood that an institution would not be penalized if it did not have an experimental component.

NCATE should develop an official paper describing its position on experimentation, defining the components that it expects an experimental program to contain, and explaining how such programs will be evaluated. It also needs to explain what happens to an institution's accreditation if the experimental program does not meet acceptable standards.

Separate the standards from the evaluation process. Some of the confusion surrounding the standards might be cleared up if NCATE would take steps to distinguish between the standards as criteria for evaluating teacher education programs and the process for evaluation leading to accreditation.

NCATE should develop two documents. One document would deal only with the standards and would include the introduction, standards, and suggestions or ways the standards could be applied to program development and internal evaluation. The second document would be on the process for accreditation, including the development of the institutional report, roles of the evaluation committees (the visiting team and the Evaluation Board), a timeline, and policies on possible NCATE action.

Explain the standards. NCATE does much to assist an institution in preparing for the evaluation. It holds briefing sessions and distributes materials that describe the preparation of the institutional report, the role of the visiting team, and the role of the Evaluation Board. Such assistance helps the institution be less apprehensive, because it knows the steps followed in an evaluation and what to anticipate.

A similar effort should be made to help an institution understand the meaning of the standards. Such an activity has one danger, because any example used to illustrate a standard can be viewed as the only approach that meets it. This danger can be reduced if care is taken to explain the purposes as well as the meanings of the standard, its relationship to other standards, and many different approaches an institution can use. In describing various approaches, emphasis needs to be placed on the substance, not the form.

Such an explanation of the standards can help an institution have a basis for looking at its own program as well as being able to anticipate what NCATE considers important.

Develop closer relationships with accredited institutions. At the present time it is possible for an institution to go nine years with little contact with NCATE except for receiving an annual letter from the director, the annual list of accredited institutions, and information as to when the next evaluation visit is planned. During these nine years the institution can experience one or more changes in the leadership for teacher education and major changes in the faculty. As a result, it is not only possible but probable that a sizable portion of the teacher education faculty will have little knowledge of NCATE or the standards. When faced by the evaluation and the standards, they can very well view the standards as difficult to understand and inflexible.

To overcome this hiatus, NCATE must develop a means to have closer contact with teacher educators in institutions. One possible approach is for NCATE to hold a biennial conference to discuss trends in teacher education and the impact on accreditation, meaning of standards, problems in the accrediting process, and areas needing change.

What the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Can Do

Since AACTE is interested in improving teacher education and since it plays a major role in developing standards employed by NCATE, institutions can expect AACTE to help in solving some problems associated with the standards.

Support the use of NCATE standards to improve teacher education programs. The association can go on record recommending that the NCATE standards be used by all institutions when planning or revising programs--regardless of whether they are interested in being accredited.

Devote more conference time to use of NCATE standards for program development. Some attention is given to the NCATE standards during the annual meetings in February and at the Conference for Executives held in the summer. These activities might be reexamined to see if they can be extended so that institutions will better understand the standards and will consider ways to use them in program development. The purpose should not be to get institutions ready for an evaluation but rather to help them grasp what the standards are and how they can benefit from applying the standards, regardless of when or whether they are to be evaluated by NCATE.

NOT AN EITHER/OR CHOICE

An institution, fortunately, is not faced with the decision to be either creative or accredited by NCATE. Neither does it have to decide whether to have a rigid program or not to be on the approved list of accredited institutions. *Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education* is written in such a fashion that much flexibility is allowed within a program.

The development of such a program is the task of teacher educators in each institution.

NOTES

1. Introduction to *Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1969).

2. Standard 3.1 in *Standards*.

3. Standard 3.2 in *Standards*.

4. Standard 3.3 in *Standards*.

5. Standard 1 in *Standards*, p. 3.

6. Introduction to *Standards*.

7. Clifford Bebell. "The Evaluation We Have." In Evaluation as Feedback and Guide. Yearbook. (Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1967). p. 19.

8. Standard G 1.6.3 in *Standards*.

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